

CHAPTER 4

DEFENSE COORDINATING OFFICER

A. GENERAL. The Defense Coordinating Officer is the focal point of any DoD response to a particular disaster. The DCO is a military or civilian official designated by the responsible DoD Component to coordinate MSCA activities in accordance with DoD Directive 3025.1, reference (c). The DCO represents a common element in the DoD MSCA effort with the FCO and the Federal response community. DCO responsibilities require knowledge of military capabilities and how to access military assets to support validated requirements. The DCO must ensure that military taskings are based on requirements that are necessary and essential.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Respond to validated requests from the FCO.
2. Establish the Defense Coordination Element (DCE).
3. Establish liaison among military, State, and other Federal Agencies for support.
4. Ensure liaison with ESF 3.
5. Ensure ESF 9 is supported as required to include liaison or a command and control team.
6. Provide a liaison officer to each activated ESF.
7. Provide mission assignments to military units.
8. Coordinate with the FCO and other ESFS for support from military units.
9. Coordinate with the FCO and other ESFS for support to military units.
10. Work with the FCO and SCO to integrate the taskings of National Guard on State Active Duty (SAD) with active units to maximize responses while avoiding duplication of effort.
11. Confirm relief priorities established by the FCO and SCO for the disaster area.
12. Develop a priority of work for supporting units.
13. Maintain an audit trail of mission requests to ensure each tasking is supported by a valid request and/or mission

assignment number. The audit trail should include estimated and actual costs of support for each mission.

14. Ensure, in the event of JTF deployment, coordination of the JTF frequency allocation request with ESF 2.

C. ACTIVATION. DCOS are activated by the appropriate CINC for each Presidentially declared disaster requiring military assistance (or under special circumstances, prior to declaration; Chapter 2, A2). Activation occurs in response to a request from FEMA Headquarters to DOMS. DOMS then notifies the supported CINC to activate a DCO. DCOS are predesignated for each State, territory, and possession. The authority of each DCO is defined in documentation issued or authorized by the responsible DoD Component and is limited either to the requirements of a specified interagency planning process or to a specified geographical area or type of emergency. Without a Presidential Disaster Declaration, the DCO lacks authority to coordinate or commit military assets. A DCO should not be activated before a disaster declaration without prior coordination with DOMS.

1. Predisaster Activation. A DCO may be appointed before a disaster declaration if there is a reasonable expectation that future events may require military involvement. Such events are usually related to hurricanes or floods. These are natural events that are somewhat predictable in intensity and location. DCOS were predesignated for natural disasters such as Hurricane INIKI and Hurricane EMILY.

2. Initial Actions. Upon activation, the DCO and DCE should normally collocate with the FCO at the Disaster Field Office. Depending on the specific nature of the event, a DCO may initially work from one location while his staff operates nearer the disaster location. The best way to gauge this decision is to ask: Where is the FCO? As soon as possible, the DCO should collocate with the FCO and place the DCE with the Disaster Field Office. Split operations may be the result of State **decision-**makers operating initially from several sites.

3. Urban Search and Rescue (US&R). Although FEMA is the lead Federal Agency for US&R, the DoD is the principle support agency for this ESF. One of the first actions required of the DCO is to coordinate with the FCO to determine if a requirement exists for the DoD to support Urban Search and Rescue. If required, FEMA will provide a Technical Support Team to manage US&R efforts at the DFO and provide technical advise to the Federal, State and local officials. If the ESF is to be activated, the DCO appoints a liaison for the ESF. In areas that have strict quarantine on animals entering from other areas, special attention is required to coordinate the entry, use, and departure of search dog teams. Local decision makers need to be informed immediately to effectively coordinate the use of these

assets. Upon arrival of the FEMA civilian US&R teams in the disaster area, the DoD provides a military radio support team and liaison officers for each team capable of continuous twenty-four hour operations. The DoD provides transportation for the FEMA US&R teams from the time of arrival in the Mobilization Center, Staging Area or in the disaster area through team redeployment to their home city and/or State. FEMA US&R teams are self sufficient for up to 72 hours. The DoD assumes responsibility after this initial period to provide service support and resupply to include replacement medicines, tools and supplies. The DoD is responsible to provide military units to conduct basic and light US&R; trained Structural Engineers from the U.S. Corps of Engineers to advise military US&R units and equipment for civilian teams to conduct medium and heavy US&R operations.

4. Assessment. The FEMA FCO conducts an initial damage assessment within the first 6 hours following a disaster or emergency. The DCO participates in this assessment. The initial assessment is used to determine the potential for military involvement. This is not a unilateral DoD assessment. The DCO continues to identify potential DoD support tasks from the FEMA assessment. Small scale and localized disasters may only require USACE contracting support, while other disasters, broader in scope and devastation, may require the provision of "basic needs" (food, shelter, water, medical support and electric power). On the extreme end of the support continuum is the need for an immediate infusion of "basic needs" assistance. This type of support is time-sensitive and "needs-specific." As such, the DCO needs to immediately identify the urgent State requirements submitted to the FCO so that a supporting JTF can be appropriately tailored.

5. Defense Coordinating Element (DCE). The DCO and Defense Coordinating Element are normally collocated with the FCO in the Disaster Field Office. The nucleus of the DCE is formed from the DCO's headquarters. Once an initial assessment is complete and the magnitude of the disaster is determined, the DCO may require additional support from service and agency liaison personnel. Additional liaison may also be necessary from local military installations to facilitate coordination and delivery of available resources. Upon request from the DCO through the supported CINC, Services and Agencies will provide EPLOS to the DCE. When considering available support for assistance, the DCO is the DoD representative. The DCE represents an in-depth liaison structure that provides liaison personnel to each activated ESF. The ability to anticipate requirements, determine needs, allocate assets, and coordinate support is inherent in this organization. Liaison officers and the DCE organization should remain under the control of the DCO at all times to prevent disjointed military-civilian support efforts.

D. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE Federal COORDINATING OFFICER (FCO)

The DCO is the DoD on-scene representative for coordinating MSCA requirements with the Federal Coordinating Officer or his/her designated representative. The DCO is the primary DoD interface in support of the State and Federal disaster relief effort. As such, the DCO participates in the incident action planning process, a formal action planning cycle that serves to coordinate short term and long term activities. Requests for assistance are based on mission requirements, not requests for specific assets. The DCO is the best arbiter of what is available for a specific task and determines how assets are allocated to the support effort.

E. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JTF COMMANDER. How the JTF and the DCO work with one another is based upon several factors including seniority, size of the task force, duration of the response effort, and the JTF mission. However, the responsibility for determining the command and control relationship between the DCO and the JTF rests with the supported CINC. Regardless of the command relationship designated, the DCO retains a full DCE staff, which is separate and distinct from the JTF staff. Otherwise, military support and coordination are severely degraded. As a practical guide, the DCO and JTF commander are not the same because they have different responsibilities and assets. The separation of these distinct functions allow the commander the flexibility to operate freely in the disaster area while the DCO focuses on task validation and coordinating DoD response activities in the Disaster Field Office. When a Joint Task Force commanded by a General/Flag officer is present, the DCO and DCE staff normally work for the JTF Commander (as a special staff officer) and closely coordinate with the task force's operations section. The DCO continues to operate from the DFO and remains the focal point for requests for military support from the FCO and after validation passes them to the JTF staff or other DoD organizations. This arrangement ensures a unity of effort, simplicity, consistency, and continuity. Not every disaster has a JTF but every disaster involving military support to civil authorities has a DCO. The roles of the DCO and JTF Commander have similarities but to dual hat the JTF Commander as the DCO could disrupt the linkage between the military and civilian agencies providing support as a coordinated element. As the single point of contact for DoD support to other ESFS and as the coordinator for all DoD support before to the arrival and after the departure of a JTF, the DCO provides the continuity necessary for efficient support to civil authorities.

F. SUPPORT TO OTHER ESFS. The DoD has a support role for eleven of the twelve ESFS identified in the FRP. The coordination aspect of this support rests with the DCO. The Department of Defense is not the only supporting agency, nor is it the **agency** of first support in all cases. The DCO must ensure that requests for support from other ESFS are approved by the FCO and have a

valid mission assignment number. Each ESF is responsible for fulfilling all of its own requirements to the maximum extent possible before asking for help. Many requests for DoD assistance can be met faster and more economically by using GSA contracting instead. The DCO must perform this "sanity check" before accepting requests from other ESFS. By way of example, the **FCO** represents the President and coordinates the efforts of the ESFS. Any request for military transportation assets that are not directly supporting military operations are tasked through and coordinated by ESF 1 (with FCO approval) with the DCO.